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ABSTRACT

This paper provides an Australian perspective on the question of the name that should be given to people who work as information specialists in schools. The paper reviews metaphorical analysis as a research tool and outlines a qualitative research project employing the metaphor technique in an attempt to discover the conceptions that stakeholders (teacher-librarians, principals, classroom teachers, and others) hold about alternative titles that could be employed by the teacher-librarian profession. The study identified the types of metaphor that would be used to identify the positions of: Teacher-Librarian, Information Specialist, and Director of Information Services. Respondents were instructed to identify a metaphor for the term, and provide an explanation of the metaphor. The paper includes two examples of the raw data collected: principals' and teacher-librarians' metaphors and explanations for the term "teacher-librarian." (Contains 23 references.) (SWC)

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TEACHER-LIBRARIAN? WHAT'S IN A NAME? MAKING MEANING FROM METAPHOR

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ABSTRACT

Under what title should teacher-librarians be known? What is in a name? This paper provides an Australian background to the questions about the name that should be given to those who work as information specialists in schools. The authors review metaphorical analysis as a research tool and outline a qualitative research project employing the metaphor technique in an attempt to discover the conceptions that stakeholders (teacher-librarians, principals, classroom teachers, others) hold about three alternative titles that could be employed by the teacher-librarian profession. This research was undertaken with a number of groups in New South Wales, Australia.

The role of teacher-librarian has been a topic of conversation among teacher-librarians for as long as teacher-librarians have existed in name, and even earlier when teachers performed the role as an extra. In Australia there has been anongoing struggle to define just what teacher-librarians should be and what they should do. In this country this struggle goes back to the 1960's when Australian governments and educational bureaucrats first 'discovered' the need for school libraries (clearly there were lighthouse practitioners in the field but it took the 'system' some time to catch up). The struggle has, however, not been limited to Australia. The same or similar debate has a history in New Zealand, England, Canada, the USA and other countries.

In recent time the debate in Australia has become more complex. One might suggest a number of possible reasons for this. The advent of the invasion of schools by the new technologies has, some would suggest, radically altered the work that teacher-librarians actually do. The economic rationalist policies of successive governments at the federal and state levels has tended to move educational funding away from anything that is not bolted down or seen as core. In this climate, funding for libraries and the staff that underpin them has been identified as 'non-core'. (On the other hand, funding to maintain class size, to meet the needs of special education, and to test outcomes has remained core.)

The advent of the electronic world and the economic rationalist vision collide to form a twin danger for teacher-librarians who may well be regarded as wedded to a print-based world that is seen to be fading fast. In this world funding (read large buckets of funding) will be found for bells and whistles that are smaller, faster, easier, more complete, and less expensive than ever before. As systems push more and more funding into information technology infrastructure and with the ongoing demands of being part of the global village, less funding will be available for traditional information resources. (This does not deny that the devolution of decision making to the school level does provide schools with some opportunity to make individual choice, but the reality is that once a school makes the technology choice future funding will be tied to that. Information technology is expensive to maintain and to replace.) We see before our eyes an emerging educational system that is becoming obsessed with answers. (Box A will do more, faster and

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better than any other box: therefore, schools need Box A.) But why do schools need boxes at all? What questions will they help teachers and students solve? Remember when schools were invaded by Apple IIs? They were going to provide a whole range of new answers. In some schools such technology provided the opportunity for a range of new teaching and learning experiences. But in many schools they tended to be used as glorified typewriters with a glorified price tag!

We talk about teacher-librarians as though every school has one. We assume that there is a common bond among teacher-librarians: that they are all competent, alive and well. We assume that there are sufficient opportunities for aspiring teacher-librarians to take a professional qualification, and for experienced teacher-librarians, ample professional development opportunities exist. These assumptions are wrong, very wrong.

Many schools do not have a teacher-librarian. Many small schools have a weekly teacher-librarian allocation of a few hours. The likelihood of such allocations being taken seriously or filled by a qualified applicant are remote. Many schools that do have a teacher-librarian, don't! A percentage of those who are titled 'teacher-librarian' have no specialist qualification in the field. Some employers accept short inservice programs as an acceptable measure of competency. Such situations would not be tolerated in other areas of education, nor would they be accepted in other professions. Can you imagine your local medical practitioner hanging out a shingle with the words 'Brain Surgeon' expecting to stay in business. Can you imagine the uproar if the local electrician suddenly decided that she was going to dabble in the odd bit of commercial plumbing!

The universities that offer education for teacher-librarianship are not overrun with applications and too few graduate from these programs to make any significant impact on Australia's 10,000 schools. In-school funding, and employer wide funding for the professional development of teachers is at an all time low which means that the maintenance of skill levels will soon become problematic.

The teacher-librarian world is certainly a mixed bag. A comparison between the services offered by a 'switched on' private school and smallish 'bush' primary school funded from the public purse will quickly demonstrate that. But whose world is it and who has the naming rights in this world? We can readily accept that in 1997 a teacher-librarian's day looks rather different from what it did in 1987, 1977 or 1967, and among schools there may be little similarity. But does this mean that the teacher-librarian's role has changed? And who should make this judgement? Is the title 'teacher-librarian' beyond its use-by-date, and who should decide that? Should teacher-librarians expect that teachers joining their rank have a specialist university qualification? Should they insist that a teacher, appointed as teacher-librarian but not qualified as one, be referred to as something else—teacher-in-charge of library resource centre—for example? Who has the muscle to win this potential fight?

Given the thoughts above it was interesting to observe the debates that unfolded on the teacher-librarianship listservs, LM_NET and OZTL_NET, during 1995/6 with respect to the role and appropriate nomenclature for school-based information professionals. Likewise it was interesting to be involved in the debate about career paths for teacher-librarians and other school-based information professionals that was raised in a concept paper at an Australian national conference on electronic networking and Australia's schools (Hay and Kallenberger, 1996), emerged on OZTL_NET in 1996 and was expanded in the August 1996 issue of *Orana*. At the time there was a transient thought of 'who cares' which took on more substance when time was found to read Poston-Anderson's very interesting research report in which she articulated the use of metaphor as a simple but robust technique to uncover what those involved with school libraries saw as the purpose of the school library (Poston-Anderson, 1996).

The question triggered by Poston-Anderson's research was: 'could the metaphor technique be used appropriately to identify what stakeholders thought of competing nomenclature and would perceptions differ between stakeholder groups?' Did anyone care? There is a growing literature demonstrating the impact of metaphor on the way we think, on our language, and on systems of scientific and everyday knowledge. Aristotle was the first significant writer to identify the role of metaphor in the production of knowledge. Metaphor is a figure of speech used to make a distinction in one's meaning on the basis of a comparison and substitution of 'real' meaning for the counterfeit meaning (Krug, 1991).

The use of metaphor as a way of seeking meaning was pioneered by Pepper (1942) and Kuhn (1970) and has been popularized by Morgan (1983, 1986) whose concern is to show how researchers can use the creative insights generated by metaphor to create new ways of understanding organisations. Morgan (1986) suggests the use of metaphor implies "a way of thinking and a way of seeing that pervade how we understand our world generally," and that one of the powerful implications for a researcher of perception and attitude is that metaphor "always produces...[a] kind of one-sided insight." (pp.12-13)

Other influential writers have suggested that researchers ought to pay more attention to the role of metaphor. (See, for example, Schon 1963, 1979; White, 1978). The impact of metaphor on language and communication generally has been subjected to detailed analysis by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). The role of metaphor in creative imagination and science has been treated by Koestler (1969) and Miller (1978). Brown (1977) has shown the metaphorical basis of social theory.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that most of our ordinary conceptual system is metaphorical in nature. The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another and embraces the general process of image crossing whereby A is seen as B. They suggest that metaphor is not just a matter of language, that is, of mere words. Human thought processes are largely metaphorical. Metaphors as linguistic expressions are possible precisely because there are metaphors in a person's conceptual system. Since metaphorical expressions in language are tied to metaphorical concepts in a systematic way, it is possible to employ metaphorical linguistic expressions to study the nature of metaphorical concepts and to gain an understanding of the metaphorical nature of roles and nomenclature.

Poston-Anderson (1996) argues that teachers develop a culture using symbolic forms such as story, myth, ritual and language. She argues that these elements become the social glue that provides meaning and sensemaking within organisations. Metaphors provide windows of understanding presented in ways that are often not confronting and thereby provide meaning. Metaphor draws our attention to distinctive but partial aspects as in the example of the man who fought like a lion. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) express this as:

> The very systematicity that allows us to comprehend one aspect of a concept in terms of another will necessarily hide other aspects of the concept. In allowing us to focus one aspect of a concept a metaphorical concept can keep us from focusing on other aspects of the concept that are inconsistent with that metaphor. (p. 10)

This is the nature of metaphor. If the metaphor could provide more than a partial picture it would be the real thing, not a representation of that. To the extent that teacher-librarians are a complex, multifaceted, contradictory member of the school staff, the metaphor provides a rich possibility as a tool to better understand the way people perceive teacher-librarians.

A search of the ERIC and Australian Education Index databases identified 25 recent applications of the metaphor technique. The technique was employed in the areas of education, organisational administration and communication. These studies gave the researchers confidence that the metaphor technique was an appropriate data gathering technique for this study. The weakness of the technique (the underplay of certain factors) would be balanced by the use of a range of stakeholders and the size of the convenience samples.

For the purposes of this study the researchers employed three convenience samples. The first consisted of teacher-librarians, principals, and support staff representing all the schools in one non-government school district in New South Wales. The second consisted of a group of government and non-government teacher-librarians attending a professional development day in Sydney. The third consisted of a mix of teachers and teacher-librarians from the non-government sector who were attending a two day inservice course in Parramatta. In total some 150 teachers were involved in the three activities although not all chose to participate in the research task.

The researchers were interested in identifying the types of metaphor that would be used to identify the positions of: Teacher-Librarian, Information Specialist and Director of Information Services. The instruction to respondents was that they should:

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Think of a teacher-librarian that you know and fill in the blank below with a metaphor that best describes your view.
A teacher-librarian is like a _____
[On the reverse side of the paper the respondent was asked to provide an explanation of their metaphor.]

In the case of Information Specialist and Director of Information Services respondents were asked to fill in the blank with a metaphor. It was not assumed that they would necessarily know a person holding a position as Director of Information Services or Information Specialist. It was expected that the metaphors representing teacher-librarians would reflect the history of personal encounter and might therefore be more colorful.

It should be noted that the form of the question strictly speaking requests a simile. And as you might expect our audience (teachers!) were quick to point out the difference between simile and metaphor. In fact the use of simile is regarded as a metaphorical form (Morgan, 1986) and is therefore appropriate.

The responses gathered from subjects have been entered into an Excel spreadsheet by participant type, and nomenclature type. At the time of writing, analysis of the meaning of the metaphors has not been completed. However, the procedure being employed is content analysis whereby metaphors with like characteristics are grouped and regrouped, eventually residing under an appropriate umbrella term or creating 'root metaphors' (Steinhoff and Owens 1989). While many of the metaphors are understandable on their own, it is the explanations of the metaphors offered by respondents that provides additional, helpful cues concerning the perceptions and experiences of subjects—both teacher-librarians and principals. Goulden and Griffin (1995) employed the metaphor technique to identify teacher-student relationships and investigate possible sources of conflict. Likewise this study can identify the differences between the two groups' perceptions potentially shedding light on the nature of the professional relationship between teacher-librarian and principal. Richards' (1992) use of metaphor analysis as a diagnostic tool in identifying professional development needs may also be used in further studies of teacher-librarians and principals regarding the teacher-librarian role.

Two examples of the raw data are given below. Table 1 represents principals metaphors for the term Teacher-Librarian, and Table 2 includes teacher-librarians metaphors for the term Teacher-Librarian.

Table 1: Principal Metaphors for the Term Teacher-Librarian

Bobbing Cork On Wavy Sea	Describes The T-L Who Works In Three Schools
Bower Bird	Collector & Hoarder
Bower Bird	Immediate Relevance Not Always Clear But Can Always Meet Every Need
Breath Of Fresh Air	Not Always There (Pt0/ Essential Part Of School Life/ See Things In Different Light
Butterfly	Brings Joy & Color To Learning
Calming Bird	Humility With Informative /Helpful Disposition
Caterpillar	Segmented & Flexible With An Ability To Methodically Complete A Thousand Tasks
Chain Link	Links Children To World Of Work
Collaborative Colleague	Someone With Whom Teachers Can Plan & Teach With
Comforting Mother	A Friend To Students
Dragon	Very Protective Of Resources & Roars At Library Users
Dynamo	Full Of Energy, Motivating Others Through Her Enthusiasm
Enthusiastic	Advertising
Agent	Has To Sell Herself
Fountain	A Constant Source Of Ideas & Resources To Develop Life Long Learning
Geni	Of Great Assistance
Grasshopper	Able To Jump In Any Direction As Required
Helicopter	Buzzing, Hovering, Finding The Best Route
Honey Bee	Busy, Provides Sustenance, Great Sense Of Direction

Idea	Something That Goes In & Out Of People's Consciousness
Intelligent Piranah	Always Snappy, Knows Everything
Intelligent Sponge	Able To Absorb A Wealth Of Information & Use It Appropriately
Isp	Providing Access
Jack Of All Trades	Multi-Skilled
Owl	Wise Observer & Reactor
Rock	Always There As Planned
Rock Of Gibralter	Must Be There To Support Others
Shelter In A Storm	Offers A Place Of Refuge For The Mis-Fits In The Playground
Sponge	The Info That The T-L Holds Is Not Always Obvious
Sponge	Soaking Up All Available Resources & Knowledge
Sunray	Light Up The Love Of Discovery
Terrier	Snaps At People Continually
Tree	Has Many Branches, Is Living/Dynamic/, Associated With Growth, Needs To Be Nourished
Trendy Technology Creep	Dinosaur Tries To Keep Up With Trends But Feels Threatened By The

Figure 2: Teacher-Librarian Metaphors for the Term 'Teacher-Librarian'

Bower Bird	Resourcesful, Scrounge, Covers Much Territory
Bower Bird	Always Seeking To Fill The Nest
Bower Bird	Territorial/Possesive/Isolated/Low Profile
(Creative) Bower Bird	Collects Everything With Flair
Broken Record	Always Repeats "I want I Want I Want"
Computer	Supposed To Have Information On Every Subject On Demand
Encyclopeadia	Source Of All Information
Fairy Godmother	Waves Her Wand Of Magic Dust To Create Conducive Atmosphere For Investigation
Fountain	Wisdom Ours Forth Enriching School
Fountain	Refreshing Life Giver
Guard	To A Room With A 1000
Doors	Can Open Many Doors To Knowledge/Determines The Best For Each Child
Holey Piece Of Plastic	Some Demands Bounce, Others Go Straight Through
Horse With Blinkers	Thinks That The Library Is The Centre Of School's Learning/ Forgets That Teachers Teach Information Skills
Knitting Needle	Takes The Threads From The Classroom & Knits Them To A Whole
Miracle Worker	The Impossible Is Done Now, Miracles Take A Bit Longer
One-Eyed Monster	Needs Of Library Greater Than Needs Of Students-Priorities All Wrong
Right Hand	Wonderful Resource For Teachers/ Indispensible
Satellite Dish	Receives Info From Cosmos, Meaningfully Packages, & Disseminates It Service For All Attends To All Classes seven All Info Needs
Signal Person Teachers Aide	She Shows Children The Best Way To Find Where They Want To Go
Time Warped Building	All Things Must Be In Place/ An Unused Place
Volcano	Bursting Forth With Information
Washing Machine Agitator	Always Busy Going Back & Forth
Water Reservoir	Sustaining Power Of School
Wave	

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